

SCP  
# 3717

THE ELEVATION OF A RACE AND  
THE REDEMPTION OF A CONTINENT.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY,

JANUARY 15, 1878,

BY

WILLIAM H. ALLEN, LL. D.,

*President of Girard College.*

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

WASHINGTON CITY :

COLONIZATION BUILDING, 450 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE.

1878.



THE ELEVATION OF A RACE AND  
THE REDEMPTION OF A CONTINENT.

---

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY,

JANUARY 15, 1878,

BY

WILLIAM H. ALLEN, LL. D.,

*President of Girard College.*

---

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

---

WASHINGTON CITY :  
COLONIZATION BUILDING, 450 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE.  
1878.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2015

## ADDRESS.

---

MR. PRESIDENT,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—

When Bushrod Washington was elected President of the American Colonization Society, sixty-one years ago, not one of the eminent men who had organized that Society imagined that the colony they were about to plant on the coast of Africa would be an independent nation before the close of the next thirty years. And when, thirty years ago, Joseph Roberts delivered his inaugural address as first president of the infant republic, who would have dared to predict that before twenty years should pass away there would not be a slave in the United States, and that before the year 1878 there would be schools and colleges and universities in successful operation for the instruction of colored youth? The bold prophet would have been sent to prison as “a person dangerous to the peace of society,” had he been caught in the South, and in the North he would have been regarded as a crazy enthusiast. The march of history is accelerated in these later years.

The succession of historical events, which, as Christians, we name the order of Providence, is not unfrequently an evolution of good from evil. God causes the wrath of man to praise Him. Prosperity has sprung from adversity, right from wrong, freedom from slavery. The Hebrew lad, sold into bondage by his brethren, becomes their preserver and benefactor. Saul of Tarsus goes forth breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and returns to preach the faith he had tried to destroy. Almost every step in the progress of civilization has been through tears and blood. The best we have is “the good of suffering born.” The death of Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light. The cross precedes the crown.

Let us suppose that a historical problem is to be solved. A continent is to be redeemed from barbarism to civilization, from idolatry to

Christianity. Suppose that the inhabitants of that continent are incapable of self-elevation, and therefore science, art, social culture and religion are to be imported from abroad. Suppose further that the climate is insalubrious to foreigners, and therefore science, art, social culture and Christianity will not be imported by them. Suppose, finally, that the people are too indolent to seek such benefits in other countries, and too ignorant to appreciate them if they did. Such was, and to a great extent is, the actual condition of a large part of Africa. How shall her millions be instructed, elevated, civilized, Christianized?

Look at the long catalogue of evils and sufferings of which good has been born, and more good is yet to be born,—wars of the native tribes to capture human merchandise; the barracoon, the slave-ship, the horrors of the middle passage; the auction block, the rending asunder of families, the consignment to hopeless and hereditary bondage; fierce and protracted political controversy; a bloody and destructive war. Were there no compensation for these tremendous evils we might doubt whether there is a God in history. Let us see what good has come, or is promised, from two centuries of suffering and wrong. By contact with civilization a barbarous but imitative race became in a degree civilized. The bondmen learned of their masters many useful arts, and how the comforts of life are obtained by labor. The descendants of idolators accepted the truths of the Bible with childlike faith, and embraced a religion, not of the head but of the heart, a form of Christianity, sentimental and emotional it may be, but suited to their imperfect mental development. Then amidst the throes of a sanguinary war came emancipation, citizenship, civil rights, equality before the law, education, and for the industrious and frugal the gradual accumulation of property. And now, last of all, thousands are looking earnestly toward the land of their fathers, and preparing to realize the cherished hope and prophecy of this Society,—a self-supporting emigration to Africa. The hardy and energetic will go to better their own condition, or at least the condition of their children; the educated and philanthropic, to better the condition of the native Africans by opening schools for their children and preaching the gospel to those who sit in the darkness of ignorance and idolatry. The elevation of a race and the redemption of a continent are the two grand objects which the American Colonization Society has kept steadily in view, and which

the present spirit of emigration, if judiciously directed, promises to realize.

The thought of redeeming Africa by the instrumentality of her own children brooded in the minds of Christian philanthropists many years before it took shape in this Society. Through all the years of slavery in this country the emancipation of individual bondmen was going slowly on. A few of the slaves purchased their freedom by the earnings of extra labor; others were liberated through the gratitude or conscience of humane masters; others by State laws. Thus arose two classes of colored people, free negroes and slaves. The social status of the two classes was very nearly equal. But in the South the free negroes were a continual menace to slavery, and the South did not want them. In the North they competed with white labor, and the North did not want them. The masses at the North had much sympathy for colored people at a distance, and ill-concealed aversion to them near at hand. But both in the North and South were found true-hearted Christian men who sincerely desired to benefit the colored people, both bond and free. These were the noble men, all of whom have gone up to God, who organized the American Colonization Society in 1817; planted the little colony on the African coast a few years later, and nursed it through its feeble infancy and dependent childhood for thirty years, and has watched its growing youth and contributed to its welfare for thirty years more.

A nation is not born at once, nor does a child-state grow to manhood in a day. Time is an element in every historic movement. The Supreme Being is patient; "His mills grind slow, but they grind exceeding fine." The infant commonwealth must draw sustenance from the mother land. When its bones enlarge and harden, and its sinews become strong, it will stand alone. Its hand power must grow as its brain power grows, until with the help of both it will protect itself against aggression and violence.

Liberia has passed its infancy. It can stand alone. It is passing its childhood and gaining strength for self-protection. Its brain power is respectable, as the addresses and other documents written by its public men abundantly prove. But it wants more hand power. It needs population. It needs men with heads to plan and hands to execute; men with will and sinew to cultivate the exuberant soil, and add to the

wealth and strength of a growing State. It has a sufficiency for present use of Esquires, and Honorables, and Excellencies. It has enough of traders who cling to the shore and speculate on supplies for arriving immigrants. In a word, it wants more producers of wealth and less ex-changers of products.

I congratulate the Society that the time has come to send emigrants to Liberia who know how to take care of themselves. The condition of our colored people has changed; and our mode of procedure which was necessary some years ago, when few but the poor and dependent were willing to emigrate, may now be changed with advantage. The time has come to encourage a self-paying emigration, or an emigration at least partly self-paying. Mr. Edward S. Morris of Philadelphia, who probably knows as much of Liberia as any man in America, and who has given the subject of African colonization much time, thought and money during the past quarter of a century, never spoke a truer word than this, "The man who has no money here, will have no money in Liberia." He, doubtless, meant that since emancipation has placed the destiny of our colored people in their own hands, the man who has not the industry to earn and the self-denial to save money in America, will be a burden and not a help in Liberia. Our colored people are beginning to practice thrift, to earn and save; and when any one of them shall have earned and saved two hundred and fifty dollars, he will be fit, if his moral character be good, to become a useful citizen of Liberia. If he have courage to go there, send him. Give him a free passage if you please. But do not send the timid, nor the shiftless, nor the lazy. Do not send the dandy *valet-de-chambre* of a gentleman—one who wears his hat on one side of his head, and holds a little cane in one hand and a cigarette in the other. He is too highly educated to be useful there. He will be a gentleman in caricature. Send stalwart, energetic men, who will not be afraid to go out of sight of ship and shore, who will go straight to the healthy interior with the means, either in cotton cloth, tobacco, or money, to buy a piece of land, build a house and make crops.

It is said when the Duke of Wellington commanded the British army in the war against Napoleon, he ordered a certain regiment to take spades and intrench. They demurred; said they were gentlemen; came to fight, not to dig. Wellington wrote to the minister of war, "Send

me no more gentlemen, send me men." He wanted men who could handle a spade as well as a musket. So does Liberia. She wants more men with spade and hoe. Agriculture is the basis of all wealth; it supplies the material of commerce and manufactures; it is the handmaid of civilization, the support of nations. The wise man said, "The king himself is served by the field."

The exhibit which Mr. Morris made of Liberian products at our Centennial Exposition, demonstrated the ability of that country to supply commerce with a goodly number of articles which the people of other countries desire and will pay for. Coffee, indigo, palm-oil, palm-soap, ivory, cam-wood, India rubber, sugar, arrow-root, ginger, ground-nuts, iron ore, gums and spices are products which the world demands and will consume. These are the promise and prophecy of prosperity and power; but they are not to be had without labor. The observation of a Greek philosopher, "God gives nothing valuable to men without labor," is as true now as it was in the days of Socrates; as true of Liberia as of America. We must not deceive our colored friends by descriptions drawn from imagination and not from facts. Liberia is not an El Dorado where gold may be gathered like stones in the highway. Without industry, intelligently directed, there can be no prosperity anywhere. If the emigrant wants food or gold, he must dig for it; if he wants coffee, he must plant the trees and wait three years for a crop; if he wants a cabin for shelter, he must build it. There, as here, freedom means freedom to work, save and enjoy, or to be idle, destitute and miserable.

The Exodus Associations, now organizing in the United States, are taking steps in the right direction. They contribute money and send delegates to Liberia to examine and report the condition, climate, soil and productions of the country, select healthy localities at a distance from the coast, and ascertain on what terms lands may be purchased, either of the Liberian Government or the natives. If the reports be favorable, large numbers will apply for passage with means to establish themselves in the selected localities, and relieve the Society of all further expense.

It has been objected that this exodus will deprive the country of the labor of a valuable class of colored people, and leave behind the idle, the dissolute, the aged and infirm, a burden on the community. This

objection seems, on first view, to have some weight; but when we consider that our colored population is between four and five millions, it is obvious that the exportation of one or two thousand a year would reduce the productive force of the country in only an infinitesimal amount, and would cause no serious disturbance of its industrial interests. The exodus on any scale probable, or even possible within the lives of the present generation, will be but a small fraction of the natural increase of the race.

But if we admit, for the sake of argument, that the exodus of one in a hundred of robust, industrious men and women may diminish production temporarily in this country in a perceptible degree, its effect on the colored people who remain would be favorable. So far as competition for employment would be diminished, they would be better off. They would receive higher wages, because the labor supply would be less and the demand equal. They would receive better treatment from their employers, whose interest it would be to keep them in the country and in their service.

But there is no danger of "a corner" in the labor market. The comfortable and contented will not emigrate; the timid and ignorant will not. They who have young children or aged parents to support will "rather bear the ills they have than fly to others that they know not of." The ambitious, aspiring and discontented will emigrate. He who resents social ostracism and political inferiority will look to a country where his race is dominant and the government his own. It is not enough that his personal freedom is secure, that all his civil rights are guaranteed, that he has facilities for the education of his children, that his life, property and reputation are under the aegis of law; the intelligent, thinking colored man feels keenly that it is not in the law, nor in his stars, but in himself, that he is an underling. He is one of a depressed race; and so long as he remains under the shadow of a dominant race, so long will he remain an underling. He will go where he will be the peer of the best.

It would be an error for emigrants to expect, during the first few years of their residence in Liberia, all the comforts of life which they enjoyed in America. Such a mistake would lead to disappointment. The children of Israel were released from bondage, but, weary and footsore, hungry and thirsty, in their desert journey, they longed for the

leeks and onions and fleshpots of Egypt. So the despondent emigrant, during the early part of his residence, may say to our Society as the Israelites said to Moses, "Why hast thou brought us forth to die in this wilderness?" The early colonists who landed at Jamestown and Plymouth endured similar and more severe sufferings. Even those who heed the dictum, "Go West, young man," sacrifice something of present enjoyment to future well-being. The feeble in mind or body are discouraged; the strong and hopeful work and wait and reap their harvest of good in due time.

A self-sustaining emigration will be of immense value to the present Americo-Africans. The little republic needs men capable of bearing arms;—men to make roads to open up the country,—men of the various mechanical trades as well as farmers, who will contribute to the national wealth by their intelligence and industry. And who can estimate the blessings of such an emigration to the native tribes, especially to those which acknowledge allegiance to the Liberian government? What increase of products by labor more intelligently directed! What advancement in education! What moral and physical improvement! What diffusion of Christian light in the dark places of superstition! Where industry goes, commerce will follow; where commerce goes, the missionary will follow,—the Bible, the school, the printing-press, the steam-engine, the railway, all will follow in rapid succession.

There are political considerations which favor a closer connection than exists at the present time between Liberia and the United States. But it is not probable that either party desires annexation. Liberia would not willingly surrender her independence, however prematurely it was declared. Her citizens would feel themselves dwarfed if their country should become an appendage of a distant and powerful nation in which they would be of no more importance than one of its fifth rate cities. Nor would the people of the United States desire the annexation of an African territory with the responsibility of defending it in the event of a foreign war. Nations are more influenced by interest than by sympathy. They are slow to accept a bargain in which they take all the risk and expense, with but slender prospect of any compensating advantage. We are not going to make a railway from Monrovia to Cairo as a gratuity through sheer benevolence. Two and a-half centuries were required to prepare this country for a railway to the Pacific.

The railway from Monrovia to Cairo will be built, but it will be built piece by piece, as the needs of commerce and travel demand, and as capital shall find it a paying investment.

Annexation would not promote the safety of Liberia, but in certain contingencies would increase her perils. Except in conflicts with native tribes, the surest defence of Liberia is her weakness. No powerful nation would wage war against a people too feeble to make even a show of resistance. The whole world would cry "shame." But if Liberia were annexed, it would be the most vulnerable part of the United States. An outlying territory, the gate to the rich commerce of a continent, would be strongly coveted, easily seized, firmly held, and never evacuated except as the result of unsuccessful war. A protectorate, in some form, would conduce more to the safety of Liberia, and to the commercial and political interests of the United States than an organic union. We may rightfully say, we ought emphatically to say, to both her native and foreign enemies, if such there be, "Hands off! Don't touch this foster child of ours."

No doubt the English merchants covet Liberia, because they wish to monopolize the trade of all Western and Southern Africa, from the great desert to the Cape of Good Hope. They will defy when they dare, and intrigue when they cannot intimidate. They will lend money to an impecunious government, as the price of its independence; and when pay-day comes they will say, "stand and deliver," unless we dispute the claim. We have a right to share in that profitable commerce, and shall not suffer the gate to be barred against us. Self-interest will induce the United States to protect Liberia against the neighboring tribes, which are peaceable unless made hostile by foreign intrigue.

Permit me to say in conclusion, Mr. President, that this Society perceives in the near future the fruition of its hopes; the consummation of its work. It has encountered obloquy at home and discouragements abroad. In circumstances the most adverse, it has cherished an abiding faith in the final triumph of its cause. Its firm trust in God, and love of humanity, sustained it when even the colored people, whose best friend it was, turned their hearts and faces against it. And now the day is dawning. Light breaks in all over the land. Education, industry and frugality are preparing an emigration, of moderate numbers at first, but gradually swelling to a mighty stream, as Liberia shall

be in a condition to absorb it, until commerce, civilization and Christianity, overleaping the boundaries of the Americo-African republic, shall redeem the continent.





